**The Abstract (executive summary)**

The **abstract** is a very **brief summary** of a journal article usually consisting **of no more than 200 words**, although the required number of words may vary from one publication to another. It generally appears immediately **after the title** (of an article) **and the name**(s) of the author(s).

In an abstract we should preferably answer each of the questions:

* **What was the research problem?**
* **How was the problem investigated?**
* **What has been found?**
* **What are the implications and the meaning of the findings for the original problem?**

An abstract can therefore only be compiled properly once the research has been completed. In some respects, **the abstract is the most important section of the report**. There are two reasons for this:

-It is the section, apart from the title, which future **researchers will scan** with a view to determining whether they should **study the entire report**.

-Only the title and the abstract are **stored for information retrieval** purposes and **published in journals**.

Since it is so extremely condensed, the abstract may require several revisions in an attempt to capture the essence of the report in the required number of words.

While writing an abstract, use present tenses and avoid complicated constructions of the language!

**EXAMPLE**

**«No Compassion for Drunk Drivers»**

Roger Simon

from the Los Angeles Times

This is only part of Simon's purpose in writing the article. We must continue to read to discover the rest of his purpose.

I would like to make an admission up front: I have a thing about drunken drivers. I hate them. I really hate them.

Every time I read about another innocent person slaughtered by a drunken driver I become enraged.

So when I saw the nationally broadcast PBS special on drunken driving last week, I did not react as many did. I did not think it was sensitive and forthright.

I did not react as Phil Donahue, the host, did when he came on at the end and said: "I was enormously moved by this documentary, as I'm sure you were."

This description of Simon's reaction to the documentary begins Simon's discussion of the scope of his article. His focus is his response to the television documentary.

Further, the scope of his article is limited to a criticism of the media and the judiciary. Honestly, Simon could have included many more "targets" within the scope of this article — such as the distillers and the brewers of alcohol, the advertisers of alcoholic beverages, or the barkeeps and store owners who sell the products. He could also have focused on the lack of responsibility exhibited by the drinkers themselves. But he does not focus on those groups. Instead, he limits his scope here to lawyers, judges, and the media.

Not me, Phil. I wanted to kick the set in.

I was plenty moved for the victims. I was plenty moved for the people who were crippled, paralyzed, reduced to vegetables or dying. But the drunken drivers themselves did not hardly move me. I thought most got off easy.

First, let me tell you about the magnitude of the problem. Someone is killed by a drunk driver every 20 minutes in this country. On any given weekend night, on any road in America, 1 out of every 10 drivers is drunk.

And that is why drunken drivers will continue to get off easy, because so many of the lawmakers, so many of the jurors, so many of the judges have driven drunk themselves. They have a certain amount of sympathy for those who get caught.

The purpose of the documentary, called "Drinking and Driving: The Toll, The Tears," was to show that a drunken driver doesn't get off easy. Sometimes they go to jail, and sometimes they lose their licenses, and sometimes they lose their jobs, we are told.

These paragraphs are crucial to Simon's purpose. He wants to write a tough piece that will shock people out of their complacency toward the issue.

But, in reality, they rarely do. Most drunken drivers get away with it. If they are caught, and few are, most go out and hire the best lawyers they can afford in order to beat the rap.

The elements that made this documentary special is that it was produced and written by Kelly Burke, 39, a Washington, D.C. television reporter. At 6:17 A.M. on July 1, 1984, after having 6 to 11 glasses of wine, his van crossed the center line and crashed head-on into a pick-up truck driven by Dennis Crouch, who was on his way to Army Reserve training.

Crouch was killed, leaving behind a son and a wife whom the report said 8 months pregnant.

After the accident, Burke's lawyer told reporters: "It's our feeling that there's a defense no matter what charges come down."

That line wasn't in the documentary, of course.

Burke's lawyer did a heck of a fine job, by the way. He was worth whatever he cost, because Burke's case was plea-bargained. In return for a guilty plea, the charge of homicide with a motor vehicle while intoxicated was dropped. Instead, Burke pleaded guilty to charges of driving under the influence and failing to stay in the proper lane.

These paragraphs are crucial to Simon's method. He is now focusing on the details of the documentary and pointing out the hypocrisy and patronizing attitude of the reporter, Burke.

His driver's license was revoked. He was sentenced to two years of unsupervised probation, fined $500, and ordered to produce a documentary on the results of drinking and driving.

But having seen Burke's documentary, I get the impression that one of the big results of his drinking and driving was getting exposure on national TV.

These paragraphs are Simon's toughest yet. He is building upon his method to reach these results about how drunk drivers rationalize their behavior to excuse themselves of responsibility.

The show, which he also narrates, uses a lot of euphemisms.

Drivers are "impaired" after "imbibing". In one case, we are told that a drunk driver who killed a family of five "didn't mean it; he didn't even remember its happening."

But didn't he mean it? Don't all drunken drivers mean it? If you drink 6 to 11 glasses of wine, as Burke did, and then get behind the wheel, just what is it you do mean?

In the last segment, Burke comes on the screen. He stands there in a nice suit, and there is dramatic background music. He tells us about a driver, who pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of alcohol. This driver had worked "long hours and began celebrating." And then this driver crashed into a guy and he now suffers from a "melancholy paradoxically like that of the victims."

And, Burke tells us, this driver now is "bumming rides" and taking "buses and the subway" because his license was revoked. Legal fees are high. If this wasn't enough, "social activists kept saying he hadn't suffered enough."

Then Burke tells us: "I was the driver." Wrong, Mr. Burke.

You were the killer. So why don't you just say it?

A guy is dead, a woman widowed, two children orphaned, and Kelly Burke is telling me what agony it is to take public transportation.

As I said, I wanted to kick in the set. I admit my reaction to drunk driving is extreme. But Burke and I do agree on one thing: "I've said many times," he told the judge at the sentencing, "I wished it had been me."

Here is the conclusion of Simon's thinking about drunk driving.

If these self-indulgent slobs would just maim and kill each other, drunken driving wouldn't upset me as much.

In fact, it wouldn't upset me at all.

**Abstract**

In "No Compassion for Drunk Drivers," Roger Simon explains the anger he felt over viewing a television documentary entitled "Drunk Driving: The Toll, The Tears." He feels enraged by the attitudes expressed both the journalist who produced the documentary, Kelly Burke, and the host of the documentary, Phil Donahue. The source of his anger seems to grow out of the hypocrisy surrounding this issue that Simon believes exists both in the judicial system and the media. First, Simon uses statistics to point out that drunk driving is a common crime in the United States, and because of that fact, judges and jurors alike are likely to be biased in favor of the drunk driver, he reasons. Secondly, Simon uses a detailed analysis of the images and language in the documentary to illustrate his contention that the media is biased in favor of the drunk driver. His evidence takes the form of language that unquestioningly portrayed the drunk driver as a victim, rather than a criminal. Simon recognizes that his solution to this hypocrisy is unrealistic: a wish that drunk drivers would only kill and maim each other.